

MULTIPLE RESOURCE AREA
HACKERS CREEK WATERSHED*
Harrison, Lewis, and Upshur Counties

Hackers Creek Watershed lies on the east side of the West Fork River in north-central West Virginia. It covers parts of Harrison, Lewis, and Upshur Counties. It is in the Central Allegheny Plateau Land Resources Area and in the Appalachian Plateau Physiographic Province. The watershed encompasses approximately 36,733 acres.

Hackers Creek flows generally west for almost half its length to the confluence of Laurel Lick. Here it turns northwest to its confluence with West Fork River at the watershed mouth. Total length of the stream is approximately 25 miles. Jesse Run, a major tributary on the east side of Hackers Creek, joins the main stem just above the town of Jane Lew. The drainage is dendritic and the drainage area has an irregular-shaped boundary. The lower part of Hackers Creek is characterized by many oxbow meanders. The watershed is approximately 14 miles long with an average width of a little less than four miles.

Two major geologic structures cross the watershed. The Chestnut Ridge Anticline crosses Hackers Creek about 1.5 miles southeast of the town of Jane Lew and the Grassland Syncline crosses Hackers Creek near the Lewis-Upshur County line. The strata appear to be nearly horizontal, with dips averaging only 50 feet per mile either northwest or southeast.

The Monongahela Group is the most important coal bearing strata in northern West Virginia. That Group contains the Sewickley, Redstone, and Pittsburgh coals, all of which had economic importance. In Hackers Creek, only the Redstone and Pittsburgh coals occur. These were extensively strip-mined. Deep mining has not been done on a large scale because of irregular thicknesses of the coal measures. These coals generally are found near the tops of the hills and they do not dip below drainage on the main stem or on any major tributaries. (Note: it is from many of these coal seams that hill side springs emerged to provide water for the early settlers.)**

The entire watershed lies in a natural gas producing region. Wells are scattered over the area with no particular pattern. Other than coal and natural gas, there are no known mineral resources of great economic importance.

Topography is steeply rolling. Elevations range from 1,850 feet to about 970 feet at the mouth of Hackers Creek.

Jane Lew, with a population of a few hundred people, is the largest town in the watershed. It is located near the watershed mouth on U.S. Highway 19 and Interstate Highway 79. There are several smaller communities in the watershed, including McWhorter on Interstate 79 just northeast of Jane Lew, and Berlin near the center of the watershed on West Virginia Secondary Route 13. Population of the watershed totals approximately 1,800.

U.S. Highway 19 and Interstate Route 79 cross the lower end of the watershed in a north-south direction. Paved connecting routes, West Virginia Highways 7 and 13, run roughly east-west through the middle of the watershed. Other paved and unimproved highways provide access

throughout most of the watershed.

(Note: Tradition says there are two roads up Hackers Creek. Some evidence of this may exist near the Fairview Cemetery as there are old roads near Stoney Run above and below the present road fill over Stoney Run. There exists an old road across Stoney Run at the confluence of this Run and Hackers Creek. Within a few feet of this crossing is a sulphur spring which flows year around. This spring furnished water for my parents and grandparents and us six children during the drought of the 1930's and the great depression. The water is cool and clear and good tasting to those who enjoy water with a mild sulphur taste and smell. This land presently is owned and operated by Joe Lightburn of Jane Lew and HCPD members are welcomed to walk over this old road and taste the water.**

Hackers Creek is included in the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources list of Quality Streams of West Virginia. It has had a past history of good bass fishing. Quality has degraded, with a resulting decline in fishing pressure, due to sediment deposits reducing productive stream pools. Fish include largemouth bass, bluegill, and bullhead catfish.

(Note: Frog legs and ~~and~~ the meaty parts of soft shell turtles may be added to the list of fish in Hackers Creek. This writer has enjoyed the eating of the seafood listed in his boyhood days. Could it be that the early settlers also derived some of their much needed protein from this fertile stream?)*

Game species in the watershed include rabbit, deer, grouse, and squirrel. Hunting pressure is dispersed, primarily due to existing land use and vegetative patterns.

(Note: Young groundhog may be added to the list above. Groundhog pie and rabbit pie are two food items which our family enjoyed from the fine cooking of my mother.)*

Developed public recreation facilities are not developed in the watershed. Private fee-fishing lakes totaling more than 10 acres are located at the lower end of the watershed. Heaviest fishing pressure is probably at Jane Lew, just above the instream water supply dam.

Upland soils consist of associations of Gilpin-Upshur and Westmoreland. Flood plain soils are Hackers, Moshannon, and Senecaville. Hackers is a deep, well-drained alluvial soil found on high bottoms. The deep, well-drained Moshannon and somewhat poorly drained Senecaville are found on flood plains.

(Note: The soils on the Hackers Creek watershed are and were fertile. This fact gives rise to the assumption that the crops grown by the early settlers were of wholesome food. This good fortune supported the hardiness of those early pioneers.)*

Approximately 45 percent of the watershed is in pasture; 32 percent in forest; 14 percent in cropland; and about 1 percent is classified as other, which includes towns, roads, and idle land. About 8 percent of the watershed has been surface mined.

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Most of the land is in farms. Livestock and dairy farming predominate, and most of the cropland is used for hay and pasture. The hydrologic flood plain of approximately 1000 acres is mainly in hayland and urban uses, with very little idle land.

The community of Jane Lew has a municipal water-supply system on Hackers Creek in the town proper, consisting of a low-head dam and treatment and distribution plant.

* The above data was taken in part from the MONONGAHELA BASIN COMPREHENSIVE STUDY, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, Economic Research Service, Forest Service, and Soil Conservation Service, August, 1971.

** Notes were provided by the researcher, Maurice L. Aliman, HCPD member, April 1988. *Robert S. Lewis, Page 10*